REMARKS

This Remarks is being filed in response to the Office Action mailed July 6, 2004 for the above-captioned application. Claims 1-13 are pending in this application and have been rejected.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-10 and 12-13 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. patent application publication no. 2002/0099700 ("Li") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,678,694 ("Zimmerman"). In furtherance of the Examiner's Interview conducted on September 14, 2004, the applicant respectfully traverses the rejection. None of the references of record, including Li and Zimmerman, either alone or in combination, teach all of the limitations found in independent claim 1 of the present application. For example, none of the references teach a method of predicting the search needs of a computerized database search user comprising "relating each of said topical categories with other said topical categories contained with said topical category database," and "associating said initial search term to any topical categories related to said initial topical category thereby creating related categories."

Particularly, Li teaches a method of arranging and ranking search results of a search engine depending upon the search results' relevancy to a queried search term. To do so, Li teaches that documents are analyzed by automated keyword extraction to ensure relevancy and consistency. (Li, paragraphs 35-41). Further, keyword relevancy can be propagated through other documents linked to the main document, thus creating a "treed" keyword extraction process. (Li, paragraphs 42-49). The extracted keywords are then associated with one or more relevant categories. (Li, paragraph 66). Further, Li teaches a method of "focused crawling" wherein seed URLs, the initial URLs returned based upon the search query, may provide proximal pages based upon the links to the seed URLs. (Li, paragraphs 79-81). The example used by Li is the keyword "NBA", which is associated with categories "Sports,"

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"Entertainment," "History," "Shopping Sites," "Business," "Auction," "Labor," and "Books," as depicted in Fig. 1. As such, when an Internet user queries the keyword "NBA" in a search engine, because the keyword "NBA" is associated with the above-listed categories beforehand by using the methods disclosed in Li, the results relating to such categories are returned and appropriately ranked and categorized. In other words, Li teaches a method which is keyword dependent, wherein the keyword must be found in and associated with each returned category, and only those associated categories are returned in response to a search query.

Zimmerman teaches a method of indexing documents based upon the prevalence of a keyword within the document itself. For example, if a first document contains a keyword ten times and a second document contains the same keyword only five times, the first document is considered more relevant and will be ranked higher in a search results list because the keyword is more prevalent in the document. Like Li, however, Zimmerman is keyword dependant and the keywords must be found in each category that is returned in a search results list.

The Examiner has further rejected claim 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Li, Zimmermann and further in view of U.S. patent application publication no. 2003/0004781 ("Mallon"). The applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's rejection. Mallon discloses a method of predicting human behavior based upon other's sociological and behavioral patterns. As such, the invention disclosed in Mallon counts the number of times that a particular keyword is present in search queries conducted by other users in order to predict the relevancy of the keyword.

None of the references of record, however, either alone or in combination, teach a method of predicting a search user's needs by assigning a keyword to a first category, relating

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the first category with other categories, and then associating the keyword with the categories related to the first category, as required by independent claim 1 of the present application.

By way of example, and without limiting the scope of the present application, the invention claimed in independent claim 1 can assign a keyword "flowers" to the category "flower shops," based upon the assumption that users querying the keyword "flowers" are interested in receiving results that are in the "flower shops" category. The category "flower shops," for example, may also be related to other categories "greeting cards" and "balloons," even though the keyword "flowers" is not assigned to those categories. Accordingly, when a user queries the keyword "flowers," a result list for "flower shops" is displayed in a well-known manner. However, since categories "greeting cards" and "balloons" have been related to the category "flower shops," the result lists associated with "greeting cards" and "balloons" are also displayed with the query for keyword "flowers," even though the keyword "flowers" is not associated and/or assigned to categories "greeting cards" and "balloons." It is in this regard that the invention claimed in the present application "predicts" a searcher's needs by hypothesizing that a person searching for the term "flowers" may not only be interested in flower shops, but also in purchasing a greeting card or balloon even though the keyword "flowers" is not assigned to the categories "greeting cards" or "balloons." To emphasize, the claimed invention is not keyword dependent, like that taught by the cited references, but rather depends upon the interrelationships and relatedness between categories, regardless if the keyword is associated with those other categories.
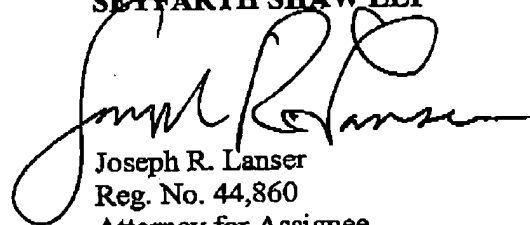
Accordingly, in view of the foregoing, the applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to reconsider and withdraw the rejections.

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CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, and in summary, the applicant respectfully asserts that the

claims of the present application are patentable. Therefore, allowance of the claims is

respectfully requested.

Respectfully Submitted,

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